

**Silver Spring
Transportation Management District
Advisory Committee
October 14, 2010**

2b

Abbreviations Used Herein:

AACE = Advocates for Alternative Transportation Excellence
CBD = Central Business District
CID = Commuter Information Day
DOT = Department of Transportation
DTS = Division of Technology Services
GRH = Guaranteed Ride Home
SHA = State Highway Administration
TMAg = Traffic Mitigation Agreement
TMP = Traffic Mitigation Plan

Item 1&2 – Introductions/ Minute Approval: Members introduced themselves. The minutes approval vote was postponed until the meeting met quorum.

Item 3 – Chair’s Comments: Co-Chair **Samantha Mazo** suggested that due to the change of meeting venue which may have caused some members confusion, Item 5 be moved to Item 4 of the agenda to accommodate other Committee members that have not yet arrived.

Item 4 – Traffic Mitigation Plan Annual Reports: **Mr. Carlson** explained the Traffic Mitigation Plan (TMP) Annual Reports to the Committee. The 2008 date that appears on all the reports is the date that company information was entered in the online system, not the date of the report submittal. Also, in response a question from **Andrew Wexler**, **Mr. Carlson** explained that the column “Employer Description” on the TMP document table refers to the company’s original TMP information entered at the time the plan was submitted; and the column “Employer Activities” refers to what the company’s has done in fulfillment of the TMP in the year since the plan was submitted. The heading “Employer Description” will be changed to Employer Plan to better reflect the report’s purpose.

Mr. Carlson said that even though the reports are required by law under the County Code, Commuter Services uses these reports primarily as a means of interaction with area businesses. The compliance rate of companies has been very high, about 98 percent.

The TMP requires an employer with 25 or more employees to agree to implement eight items at their worksite (listed below). Commuter Services then assists the employer in implementing the agreed-to measures. The employer agrees to:

- Designate a point of contact in the company to receive and distribute information
- Post and distribute transit and other alternative transportation information
- Facilitate TMD staff presentations to employees
- Participate in the Annual Commuter Survey
- Promote the Guaranteed Ride Home Program (GRH)
- Have information re: American with Disabilities Act ADA
- Have a permanent display area for commuter information

- Compile information on yearly TMP activities (Annual Report)

Ms. Brecher said there are measures in the law to deal with non-compliant companies; however, Commuter Services' stance is to encourage cooperation and partnerships. **Mr. Carlson** said there were two companies on the Annual Reports list (in meeting packet) not recommended for approval - American Nurses Association and Acorn Media Group. Both either did not meet the minimum requirements of the TMP or were not responsive, answering "n/a" to several required elements. The lack of response may be due to employee turnover or communication issues. There are cases where an employee did file a report but left the company and the new employee wasn't aware of the TMP or the process to follow. **Ms. Brecher** said that in situations such as this Commuter Services can supply a copy of the initial report to the employer. **Mr. Carlson** will follow up with companies making sure they have all necessary materials to be compliant. He agreed with **Mr. Wexler** that the column headings can be confusing; and since the reports were transferred to a web-based format they are in need of an update.

Mr. Rodriguez said he understood Commuter Services' stance in using the power of persuasion in dealing with employers because the County would not want to alienate them or cause them to move. He also said he would like the Regional Center to play a role in showcasing companies that have good Traffic Mitigation Plans as a way to inform the public of what is working in the County.

Ms. Brecher said the County has recognized employers who provide alternative transportation choices at the Commuter Services AACE Award Ceremonies (Advocates for Alternative Transportation Excellence). In the past, Commuter Services has held its Transportation Award Ceremony, a similar event, in larger venues; these events have been attended by **Governor O'Malley, Senator Sarbanes, Montgomery County Executives** and others. **Ms. Brecher** said that, unfortunately, due to budgetary constraints there was not an AACE Award Ceremony this spring. Commuter Services did, however, host a Live Near Your Work / Telework conference. Commuter Services also makes use of an e-newsletter to post information about outstanding businesses.

Mr. Wexler volunteered to do a case study for the e-newsletter featuring companies that provide good examples of businesses promoting alternative transportation programs. He also suggested that some companies could perhaps mentor other companies with their TMPs. Commuter Services has taken efforts to encourage regular business contact through the Green Business Certification program and has also discussed peer to peer networking as well. **Mr. Wexler** suggested a list of companies be compiled of businesses that are willing to participate in peer to peer networking.

Ms. Brecher said a list is being compiled as an outgrowth of the Live Your Work/Telework conference. However, it could be expanded to encompass TMPs and green businesses also.

Ms. Mazo suggested another way to reach business is through the Chambers of Commerce. **Ms. Brecher** said when staffing was available Commuter Services did attend Chamber functions on a regular basis. Now there is only one Marketing Specialist for all of Montgomery County when at one time there were three. There are two contractors in the Bethesda and North Bethesda

TMDs. Current efforts are being focused more on Commuter Information Days (CIDs) as a way of reaching employees regarding alternative commuting options.

Rukiyat Gilbert suggested having one of the Committee's Chamber representative send an article to the Chamber via email blast/newsletter in addition to attending Chamber functions. She also offered to attend some after hour chamber events to market and promote commuter options to reduce Commuter Services staff issues. **Ms. Brecher** offered to provide **Ms. Gilbert** with information and talking points.

Mr. Wexler said that reorganizing the web site may make it more user-friendly and easier to navigate.

Ms. Brecher explained that the site has been under construction for two years because the Division of Technology Services (DTS) does not have the staffing available to upgrade the site and they won't allow an outside contractor to complete the process. However, permission had been granted to purchase the DreamWeaver software program and staff is being trained to use the software when it is finally upgraded. Only one staff person can do minor system tweaking because DTS maintains strict controls.

Mr. Rodriguez commented that the Silver Spring Regional Center is also experiencing staff shortage due to budgetary issues; however, his organization is finding ways around budgetary difficulties by using volunteers to staff the welcome desk. Also, one of the advisory committees started a Facebook page which received 300 hits in less than a week. He sees this as a new way of getting things done.

In response to **Ms. Gilbert's** questions about County limitations on social media sites, **Ms. Brecher** said that the Committee could start a Facebook page independently; however, the County has restrictions on what Commuter Services could publish and does not have the staff to constantly update the page.

Some members said that social media outlets would:

- Steer people to the Commuter Services website;
- Provide up to the minute information;
- Create a 'buzz' in a hi-tech way.

Ms. Mazo said that whatever the Committee can do to encourage businesses to file Traffic Mitigation Plans may have a disconnect using social media because the agreements are required by law and a site like Facebook may give the impression that they are optional. Although discussion about social media is helpful, employer responses to the TMPs decreased once the surveys were put online. The Committee should work with the realistic constraints of:

- A regulatory process that requires employers to enter information into TMPs;
- A regulatory process that requires annual reports;
- An internet process that provides us with incomplete results.

Ms. Mazo suggested the Committee should take an active role in urging delinquent businesses to be compliant by reaching out to the business community. **Ms. Brecher** said she would welcome

the effort. Perhaps the Committee could send a letters or use other formal channels for employers who have been really recalcitrant. **Mr. Wexler**, noting the current work load of Commuter Services staff, volunteered to help create letter templates for that purpose.

In the discussion about fining delinquent companies, **Ms. Brecher** said she did not want to alienate businesses, and **Sgt. Harmon** explained that it takes a lot of resources fining or bringing entities to court.

Mr. Wexler suggested reaching out to the blogger community because younger people tend to pay attention, and it would be a way to build grassroots support for Commuter Services programs. They may talk to their HR person if it is brought to their attention that their employer is not in compliance with the County Code, prompting action on the employer to work with Commuter Services. **Mr. Rodriguez** said he would provide a list of 22 bloggers in the community to assist.

Ms. Mazo said getting weekly email blasts to the Chambers is a good idea, reiterating **Ms. Gilbert's** earlier comment, and she would assist in passing information on to the Chambers. The Committee said that as many times as companies hear the message to complete TMP surveys and other correspondence the better.

Mr. Carlson asked the Committee to read over the summary sheet of submitted TMPs and Annual Reports and also to go online to look at the actual Annual Reports and at December's meeting recommend the reports to be approved by the Department Director. [This action item should be moved to January to accommodate presenters at December's meeting]

Item 5 Draft Letter-Falkland Chase Development: **Ms. Mazo** said because the Falkland development team is submitting its plan to the Planning Board November 18th the board should submit a "Summary of Discussion" approving of the development project as a way to support Falkland Chase and to advertise the Advisory Committee's role in reviewing Traffic Mitigation Agreements (TMAs) existence.

Mr. Furgol suggested adding car sharing to the discussion summary.

Ms. Brecher said that because there was a consensus to vote to draft a letter at September's meeting, it would be appropriate to submit a Committee Recommendation as opposed to a Summary of Discussion.

Ms. Gilbert suggested adding pedestrian amenities to the list of recommended TMP strategies to stress the importance of pedestrian safety. **Mr. Carlson** said the letter was drafted with the intent that Home Properties would amend its development plan to include pedestrian safety.

Sgt. Harmon discussed a concerned citizen letter about pedestrian safety. He was also concerned that the pedestrian safety audits have not looked at the section of East West Highway between Colesville and 16th Street which is where development is to take place.

Mr. Furgol reiterated the county's policy of not approving development plans unless pedestrian safety is adequately addressed.

Sgt. Harmon stressed the need for the County Department of Transportation (DOT) to be more assertive with the State Highway Administration (SHA) regarding pedestrian safety, focusing more on the local community and putting measures in place in a proactive effort to avoid pedestrian fatalities.

The Committee decided to use language stressing pedestrian safety as a key recommendation in the letter.

Mr. Eapen said it would be a good idea to have **Mr. Eastwood** from Home Properties present to the Committee an update because they have made pedestrian safety improvements to the development plan which is available online.

Mr. Eapen said the sidewalk widening on the corners of 16th and East West Highway is part of the development plan improvements. **Sgt. Harmon** was concerned that the electrical utility box on the corner of Colesville and East-West was not moved, still blocking left turning drivers view. **Mr. Eapen** said removal of the box may not happen until after Purple Line construction. **Sgt. Harmon** said there is a disconnect between agencies regarding pedestrian safety issues.

Mr. Carlson said he would circulate the Committee's letter before submitting to DOT Director also at **Mr. Rodriguez** request, the Citizens Advisory Board and the Urban district Committee Chair will be copied.

Ms. Brecher said the finalized letter of recommendation will be sent to **Art Holmes**, Director of DOT, and the Planning Board will be copied.

Item 6 Updates: **Sgt. Harmon** announced:

- There were pedestrian strikes in the CBD during the summer but no fatalities;
- A letter of complaint by a concerned citizen about Colesville and Georgia Avenues;
- A State Highway Administration meeting today (10/14/10) about updating the reversible lanes with LED lighting.

In response to **Mr. Wexler's** concerns of not knowing about the meeting, **Mr. Rodriguez** said the meeting does not cover the broader concerns of the Committee; for example, the lagging left light at the intersection of Georgia and Colesville avenues.

Mr. Wexler reiterated the need for the Committee to be aware of these types of meetings. He said that the TMD AC and the other Silver Spring advisory committees had an opportunity to meet with the head of SHA after the Governor's Capital for a Day event in June, but the lack of coordination between the committees caused it to fall through.

Mr. Rodriguez said he would work on bring SHA to the committee.

Sgt. Harmon said that it would be better to have people in attendance at SHA meetings who know what the problems are on the ground. His team investigates crashes in the Central Business District (CBD) and could give SHA better direction in constructing safer highways. Getting to the different meetings is a challenge because his department took 310 furlough hours, which has shortened staffing resources. The cuts have impacted safety in downtown Silver Spring and the Briggs Chaney areas.

Ms. Mazo said the business community through the Chamber is working with the police to create a security task force to assist with lack of resources.

Ms. Mazo suggested the Committee look into consolidated meetings of all of the County's TMD Advisory Committees: Silver Spring, Friendship Heights, Bethesda and North Bethesda. The combined advisory committees could meet perhaps three times per year.

Mr. Rodriguez said that the Falkland Chase presentation is a good candidate for consolidated meetings because it is a general presentation that may be of interest to all the TMDs.

Ms. Brecher said that geographical topics would bring advisory committees inside the TMDs and functional topics would be for all the TMDs.

Ms. Brecher said another topic of interest would be the Growth Policy approach which is spearheaded by **Deputy Director Edgar Gonzalez**. **Ms. Brecher** is working on having **Mr. Gonzalez** give a presentation early November.

**Silver Spring Transportation Management District Advisory Committee Attendance Sheet
October 14, 2010**

Voting Members (12)			
Name	Affiliation	Present	Absent
Chamber Members (3)			
Vacant			
Vacant			
Samantha Mazo / Co-chair	Linowes and Blocher LLP	X	
Citizens Advisory Board Members (3)			
Edward Furgol	Kemp Mill, Four Corners, East SS	X	
Vacant	North & West Sector Plan Area		
Andrew Wexler / Co-chair	CBD Resident	X	
Employers less than 50 employees (3)			
Rukiyat Gilbert	Southern Management Co.	X	
Everton Latty	iDeal Decisions, Inc.		X
Cathy Wilde	Solid Waste Assoc. of N. America		X
Employers with 50 or more employees (3)			
G. Michael Price	Discovery Communications		X
Vacant			
Vacant			
Non-Voting Members (3)			
Sandra Brecher, DOT Transit Services	DOT Director or Designee	X	
Cherian Eapen, M-NCPPC	M-NCPPC	X	
Sergeant Thomas Harmon	Montgomery County Police	X	
Staff			
Nakengi Byrd	DOT, Commuter Services	X	
Jim Carlson	DOT, Commuter Services	X	
Reemberto Rodriguez	Silver Spring Regional Center	X	
Guests			